

“It’s On Us Hopkins”

Sexual Violence
Climate Survey:
Principal Findings

Johns Hopkins
University
Baltimore,
Maryland
Winter 2016

Background

In fall 2014, President Ronald Daniels and Provost Robert Lieberman convened a group to create, administer, and disseminate the results of a sexual violence climate survey. The group's efforts were led by an internationally renowned expert in violence against women and member of the faculty, Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell. Dr. Campbell's work has been cited by the White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault, and the university is one of three that were asked to partner with the White House and contribute to the national body of knowledge on campus sexual assault. The survey, *It's On Us Hopkins*, was developed by Dr. Campbell and her colleagues in collaboration with the Provost's Office, and reflects an attempt to incorporate the best features of other publicly available sexual assault survey instruments along with the scientific literature on best practices.

This summary has been prepared to convey the principal results of the survey to the community. It was authored by the Provost's Office in collaboration with Dr. Campbell and her colleagues, who will continue to analyze and disseminate findings from the survey and from a companion research project that includes in-depth interviews with victims of sexual violence.

For information on resources and how to file a report of sexual misconduct, please visit <http://sexualassault.jhu.edu>.

Methods and Definitions

The *It's On Us Hopkins* survey was designed to examine the prevalence and characteristics of unwanted sexual experiences at JHU, the health consequences of such experiences, and utilization and perceptions of resources to cope with and address unwanted sexual experiences. In spring 2015, 12,773 students representing all full-time undergraduate (N=5,786) and graduate students (N=6,987) were asked to complete the survey.

The survey, approved by the JHU School of Medicine's Institutional Review Board, collected data on a variety of unwanted sexual experiences and behaviors. Previous studies have indicated that it is useful to ask about such behaviors and experiences in two ways, one in which specific descriptions of behaviors are provided (referred to as *unwanted sexual behaviors* here), and another in which terms are not defined or described (referred to as *labeled experiences* here). The utility of asking questions in both ways is discussed below.

A set of questions in the survey asked about unwanted sexual behaviors that the respondent might have experienced while at JHU; these questions included explicit descriptions of the behaviors. These items were drawn from the Sexual Experiences Survey, which is a widely used measure of sexual assault first developed more than three decades ago by University of Arizona professor Mary Koss and her colleagues and updated over the years. For the purposes of this report, we use the following terms:

- **Unwanted sexual contact:** Unwanted experience of someone who fondled, kissed, or rubbed up against the private areas of the respondent's body or removed some of his or her clothes
- **Sexual violence:** Unwanted experience of someone who (a) tried or succeeded in sexually penetrating the respondent vaginally/anally, and/or (b) tried or succeeded in performing oral sex or making the respondent give oral sex
- **Unwanted sexual behavior:** Report of either unwanted sexual contact or sexual violence

Individuals reporting unwanted sexual behavior were asked a series of follow-up questions about the incident or, if they experienced more than one incident, the experience that they remember the most.

A separate set of questions in the survey asked about labeled experiences, based on commonly used terms, with either no or only partial descriptions of specific behaviors. These included:

- **Stalking:** Report of having been stalked or followed, or having received repeated unwanted messages, texts, emails, etc., from someone that made him or her uncomfortable
- **Controlling and abusive relationship:** Report of having been in a relationship that was controlling or abusive (physically, sexually, psychologically, emotionally, or financially)
- **Sexual harassment:** Report of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal conduct of a sexual nature when this conduct is made a condition of employment, or resistance to behavior affects employment/ academic decisions, or if conduct creates a hostile environment
- **Sexual assault:** No clarifications were given to the respondent for this term

The survey also asked students if they had experienced a set of nine *sexual and gender harassment behaviors* while at JHU in a class, lab, or work setting, in a social setting, or elsewhere at JHU.

Using questions adapted from the MIT Community Attitudes on Sexual Assault survey and other sources, the survey asked about students' perceptions of JHU culture, their experiences, and their perceptions of others' attitudes and views. Lastly, respondents were asked about their familiarity with the Johns Hopkins Office of Institutional Equity, Office of Student Affairs, and JHU resources available in the aftermath of a sexual assault.

Comparisons With Other Climate Surveys. In several places in this report, JHU data are compared with two surveys, the 2014 Community Attitudes on Sexual Assault survey conducted by MIT that served as the starting point for the JHU survey, and a second conducted by the Association of American Universities (AAU), of which JHU is a member. Briefly, the purpose of the MIT survey was “to understand students’ perceptions and opinions about different types of social behavior, and their experiences with sexual assault and sexual misconduct. The survey instrument was developed by a team of MIT community members who adapted questions from several studies on related topics conducted at other universities.” A number of items in this survey were identical to items in the JHU survey.

The AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct was designed and implemented by the research firm Westat, working with a team of researchers and administrators. The survey, administered at the end of the spring 2015 semester at 27 universities throughout the country, was designed to assess the incidence, prevalence, and characteristics of incidents of sexual assault and misconduct. It also evaluated the overall campus climate with respect to sexual assault or misconduct. It examined the same two types of sexual contact that the JHU survey had used: penetration and sexual touching. In addition, the AAU survey examined four tactics—physical force, drugs and alcohol, coercion, and absence of affirmative consent—as well as other behaviors, including sexual harassment, stalking, and intimate partner violence.

Response Rate

5,091 students responded to the survey. Of those, 3,977 students completed the survey (and their data were used for the findings presented here), for an overall response rate of 31%. Students from all nine academic divisions of JHU participated. Female students were more likely to respond (39% undergraduates, 34% graduate students) than male students (25% for both undergraduates and graduate students), giving the final sample a slightly greater proportion of females (61%) than in the surveyed student population (52%). While students reporting alternate gender identities are an important population for studying sexual violence, the number identifying themselves as such and responding to the survey was very small (n=32), so many of the results in the tables below are displayed only for the four principal groups (female undergrads, male undergrads, female grad students, and male grad students).

Comparisons With Other Climate Surveys. The MIT survey was administered to 10,831 students, with a response rate of 35% (ranging from 30% of male graduate students to 46% of female undergraduate students). The AAU population sampled was 779,170 (all enrolled undergraduates, graduate, and professional students 18 years and older at the participating universities). The response rate was 19%, with a total of 150,072 students participating. Thus, the MIT survey had a response rate similar to that of the JHU survey, but the AAU survey had a significantly lower average response rate than the JHU survey, though response rates across the participating universities varied significantly, from a low of 7% to a high of 53%.

Principal Findings

Unwanted Sexual Behavior

Overall, 613 students reported that they had experienced some type of unwanted sexual behavior while at JHU, for an overall prevalence of 15% (nearly one in seven students). 542 (14%) students reported unwanted sexual contact, and 281 (7%) reported sexual violence. Reports of these behaviors varied strongly by the type of student, as shown in the following table for the 607 students in four principal groups. It does not include the five students reporting alternate gender identities—out of 32 total—who reported unwanted sexual behaviors.

	Undergraduate Students		Graduate Students	
	Female (n=1149)	Male (n=712)	Female (n=1255)	Male (n=815)
Any Unwanted Sexual Behaviors (Unwanted Sexual Contact or Sexual Violence)	381 (33%)	81 (11%)	108 (9%)	37 (5%)
Unwanted Sexual Contact	346 (30%)	73 (10%)	85 (7%)	32 (4%)
Sexual Violence	190 (17%)	21 (3%)	58 (5%)	12 (2%)

The 613 respondents who reported unwanted sexual behavior were asked if the perpetrator used tactics such as taking advantage of them while they were incapacitated due to use of alcohol or drugs, threatening them or someone close to them with physical harm, and/or using force or a weapon. Overall, 56% of those reporting any unwanted sexual behavior also reported accompanying incapacitation due to alcohol or drugs, threats, or use of force. Mostly, incapacitation due to alcohol or drugs was involved, with use of force and threats of physical harm being relatively rare. The breakdown of tactics for the four principal groups is shown below:

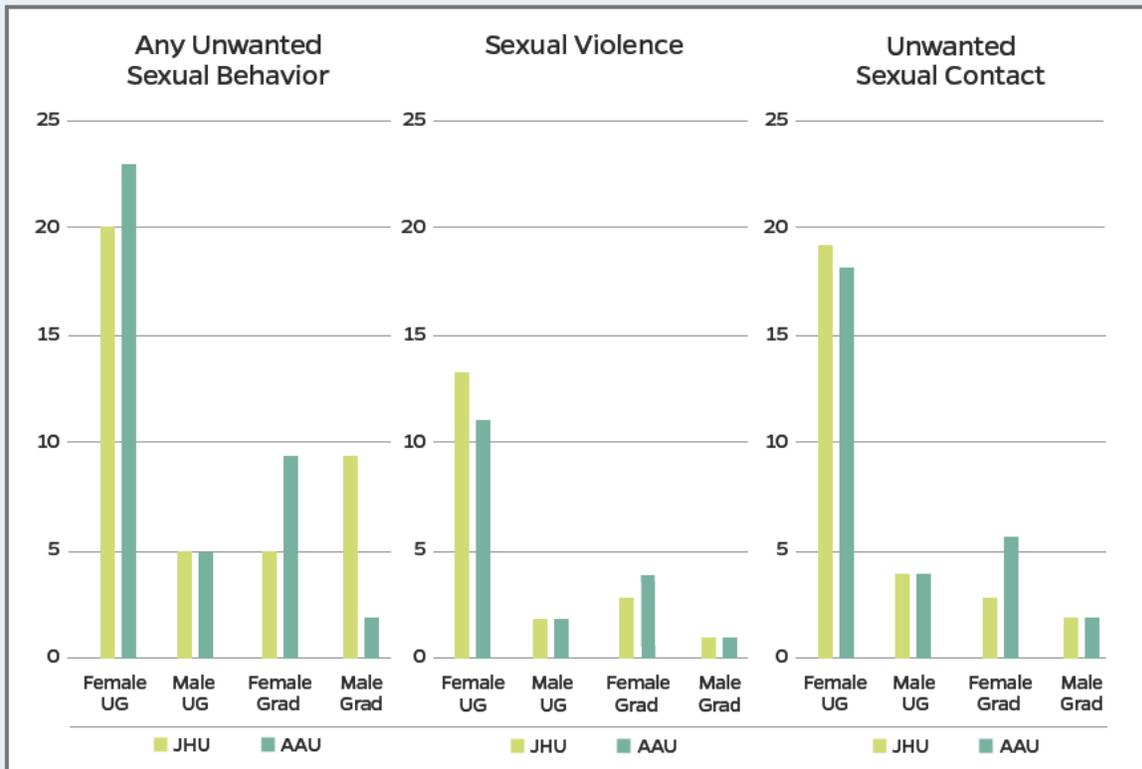
	Undergraduate Students		Graduate Student	
	Female (n=381)	Male (n=81)	Female (n=108)	Male (n=37)
Use of force or a weapon	21 (6%)	1 (1%)	5 (5%)	0 (0%)
Threats to physically harm	2 (<1%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	3 (8%)
Incapacitation due to alcohol or drugs	229 (60%)	36 (44%)	49 (45%)	14 (38%)
Force, threats or incapacitation	237 (62%)	36 (44%)	54 (50%)	14 (38%)

The reported occurrence of these accompanying tactics was slightly lower for unwanted sexual contact (overall 57%) than for sexual violence (overall 71%). As with the reporting of any unwanted sexual behavior, most of the reports concerned incapacitation due to alcohol or drugs.

Comparisons With Other Climate Surveys. The AAU survey reported similar outcomes using slightly different terminology (*sexual penetration* similar to what the JHU survey termed *sexual violence*; *sexual touching* similar to what the JHU survey termed *unwanted sexual contact*; and a combined variable *nonconsensual sexual contact* which the JHU survey termed *any unwanted sexual behaviors*). However, the principal results reported by AAU were whether these outcomes occurred as a result of one or more of four tactics: (1) physical force or threat of physical force, (2) being incapacitated because of drugs, alcohol, or being unconscious, asleep, or passed out, (3) coercive threats of nonphysical harm or promised rewards, and (4) failure to obtain affirmative consent. Thus, in order to construct estimates that could be more directly compared to the AAU outcomes, multiple outcomes and tactics data from the JHU survey had to be combined.

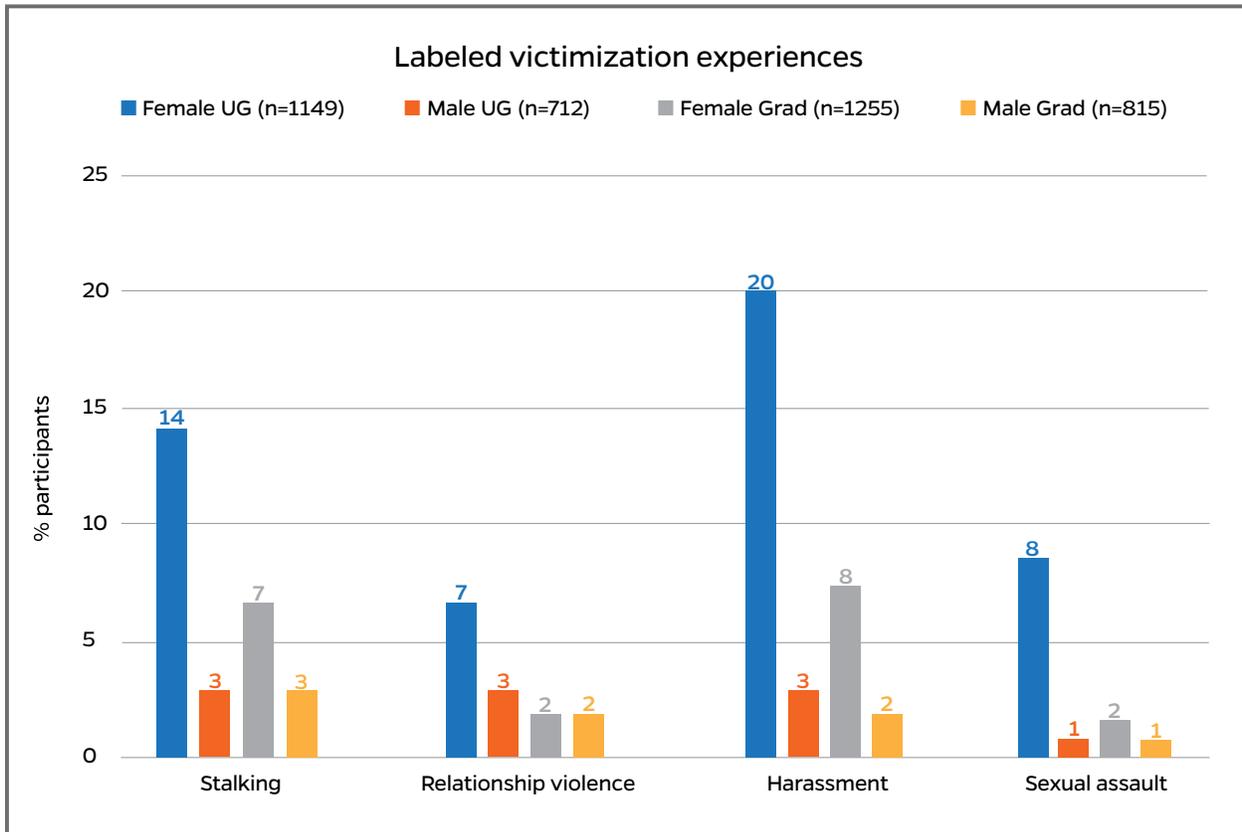
As a key illustration, the AAU reported that approximately 23% of female undergraduates across the 27 universities reported experiencing nonconsensual penetration or sexual touching by force or incapacitation. The prevalence of nonconsensual penetration or sexual touching in our survey was 33% among undergraduate women; however, only 62% of those women reported that they were incapacitated or threatened with force. Taken together, the comparable estimate is $33\% \times 0.62 = 20\%$, which is in line with the 23% reported in the AAU survey.

The following graph shows a side-by-side comparison of important estimates from the JHU survey, calculated by methods similar to the one illustrated above, with the AAU survey results.



Unwanted Labeled Experiences

The following graph shows the proportion reporting four different unwanted labeled experiences at JHU. Undergraduate females were most likely to report each unwanted experience.



Comparisons With Other Climate Surveys. The JHU survey used questions from the MIT survey in this component of the survey, so we could directly compare the results, which were strikingly similar. For undergraduate females, for example, 14% reported stalking (vs. 14% JHU), 8% reported relationship violence (vs. 7% JHU), 15% reported harassment (vs. 20% JHU), and 10% reported sexual assault (vs. 8% JHU). Results for other groups were also similar to the MIT results.

Comparisons Between Unwanted Sexual Behaviors and Labeled Experiences

The findings from the JHU survey indicate a lower rate for labeled experiences compared with described behaviors. For example, while only 8% of undergraduate females reported sexual assault as a labeled experience, 17% reported sexual violence as a described behavior. This discrepancy highlights the importance of asking survey questions in both ways, one that includes explicit descriptions and another that is driven only by a label — a commonly used term. Prior research has shown that such commonly used terms, when used as “labels” of experiences, are sufficiently vague and without a shared understanding of their meaning that they facilitate either over- or under-reporting compared with the reporting of behaviors with explicit descriptions. The JHU survey findings represent a common pattern — less reporting of labeled experiences than described behaviors — indicating that victims often do not actually realize that they have truly experienced sexual violence because they incorrectly apply a higher threshold to the labeled term and don’t count themselves as having experienced it.

Additional Findings Regarding Unwanted Sexual Behaviors

The JHU survey provided additional data on characteristics regarding the unwanted sexual behavior. Among female students reporting any unwanted sexual behavior, most reports (95%) concerned a male perpetrator. Among male undergraduate students, 61% of reports concerned a female perpetrator, while only 38% of reports from male graduate students concerned female perpetrators.

Overall, 75% of the perpetrators of unwanted sexual behaviors were JHU students. In terms of the relationship with the perpetrator of unwanted sexual behavior, 66% of the respondents said the perpetrator was a friend, acquaintance, peer, or colleague, and 32% of respondents reported they had no prior relationship with the perpetrator.

Among all undergraduates reporting unwanted sexual behaviors, the majority of incidents occurred on campus: 39% were reported to occur in JHU-affiliated housing and 23% in nonresidential JHU buildings. Among graduate students, the majority of incidents occurred off campus: only 13% were reported in JHU affiliated housing and 15% in nonresidential JHU buildings.

Overall, 61% of the students reported having had an intimate partner while at JHU. Of those reporting an intimate partner, 9% of undergraduates (10% female, 7% male) and 6% of both male and female graduate students reported having been emotionally abused by them. Reporting of physical abuse by an intimate partner was low (5% for undergraduates, 2% for graduate students).

Disclosing the Occurrence of Unwanted Sexual Behaviors

Among those reporting any unwanted sexual behavior, the survey asked students whether they disclosed the occurrence of their experience to anyone else. Overall, 66% reported that they shared with someone in an unofficial capacity without the expectation that action would follow. Mostly, this sharing occurred with friends/classmates/peers (64%), and far less with family members (13%). Even fewer (3%) formally reported the incident to someone in an official capacity, either with the expectation that action would follow or that the report would be kept on an official record. When sharing, more than half (56%) of the students received a supportive response, and 11% were provided with information, resources, and services. When asked what happened after they shared the incident, more than half (52%) said that nothing happened. Note that this statistic includes all types of sharing, and only 3% of the time was a formal report given to someone in an official capacity.

Students were provided with a list of negative thoughts or concerns that played a role in their decision to share/report their experience, and were asked to mark all that apply. Overall:

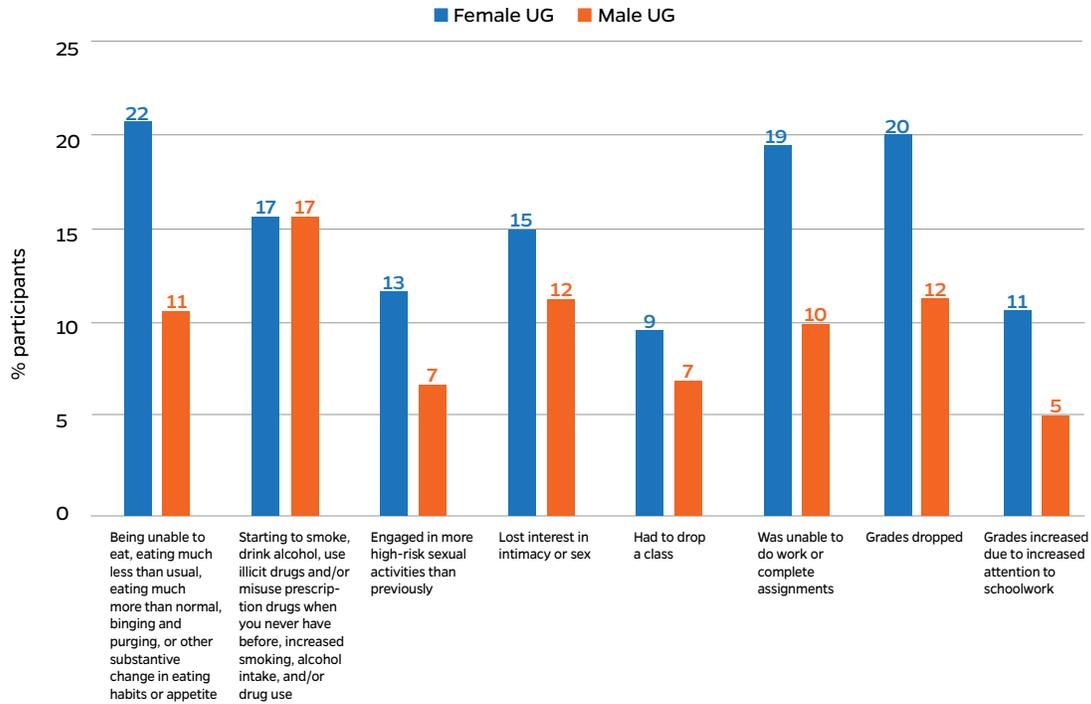
- 61% didn't think it was serious enough to share
- 34% felt partly at fault
- 31% felt embarrassed or ashamed
- 21% did not want the perpetrator to get into trouble or didn't want to ruin the person's life or hurt his/her future
- 21% did not know whom to tell
- 18% feared being blamed or not believed
- 16% didn't think JHU administration would do anything
- 15% were fearful of retaliation by the perpetrator

Comparisons With Other Climate Surveys. In the AAU survey, a relatively low percentage (28% or less) of even the most serious incidents was reported to an organization or agency (e.g., Title IX office; law enforcement), more than 50% of the victims of even the most serious incidents (e.g., forced penetration) say they did not report the event because they did not consider it “serious enough,” and a significant percentage of students say they did not report because they were “embarrassed, ashamed or that it would be too emotionally difficult” or they “did not think anything would be done about it.”

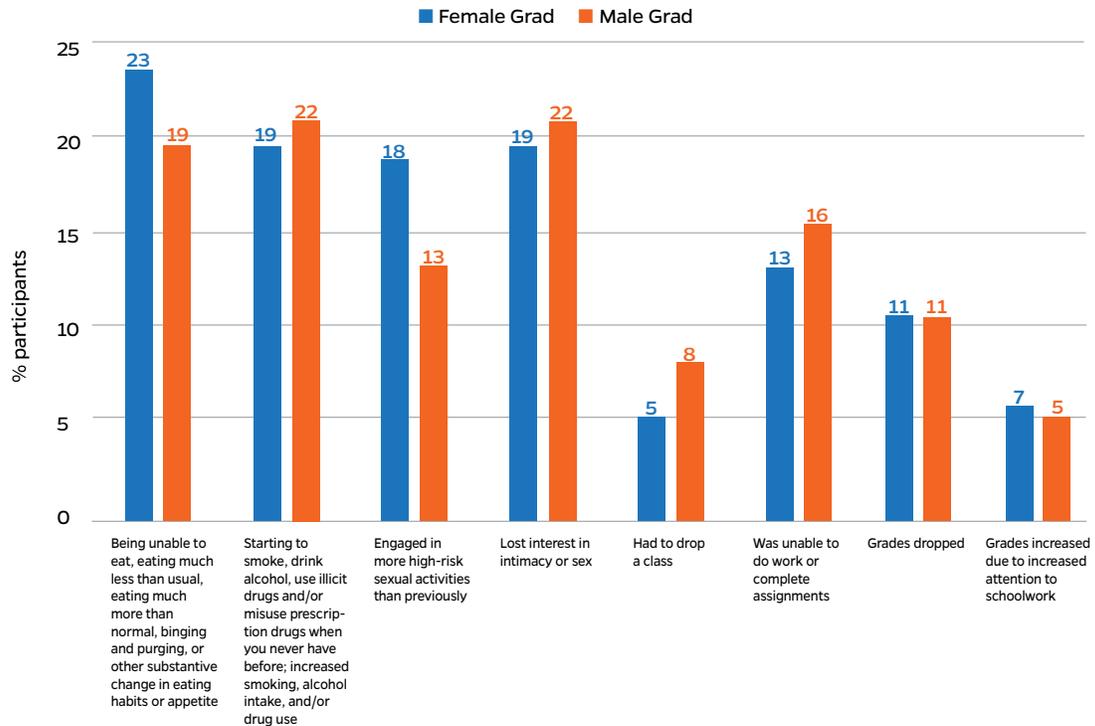
Impact of Unwanted Sexual Behaviors and Experiences

The survey asked students to rate on a five-category scale the extent to which any health- and academic-related problems (e.g., eating disorders, drug or alcohol use, and others) impacted their lives because of, since, or related to any of the unwanted sexual experiences they described in the survey. The figures below show reports for those who experienced unwanted sexual behaviors and reported problems in the three highest categories of “moderate,” “quite a bit,” and “extreme”.

Percent of undergraduate respondents reporting different impacts due to experience of an unwanted sexual incident



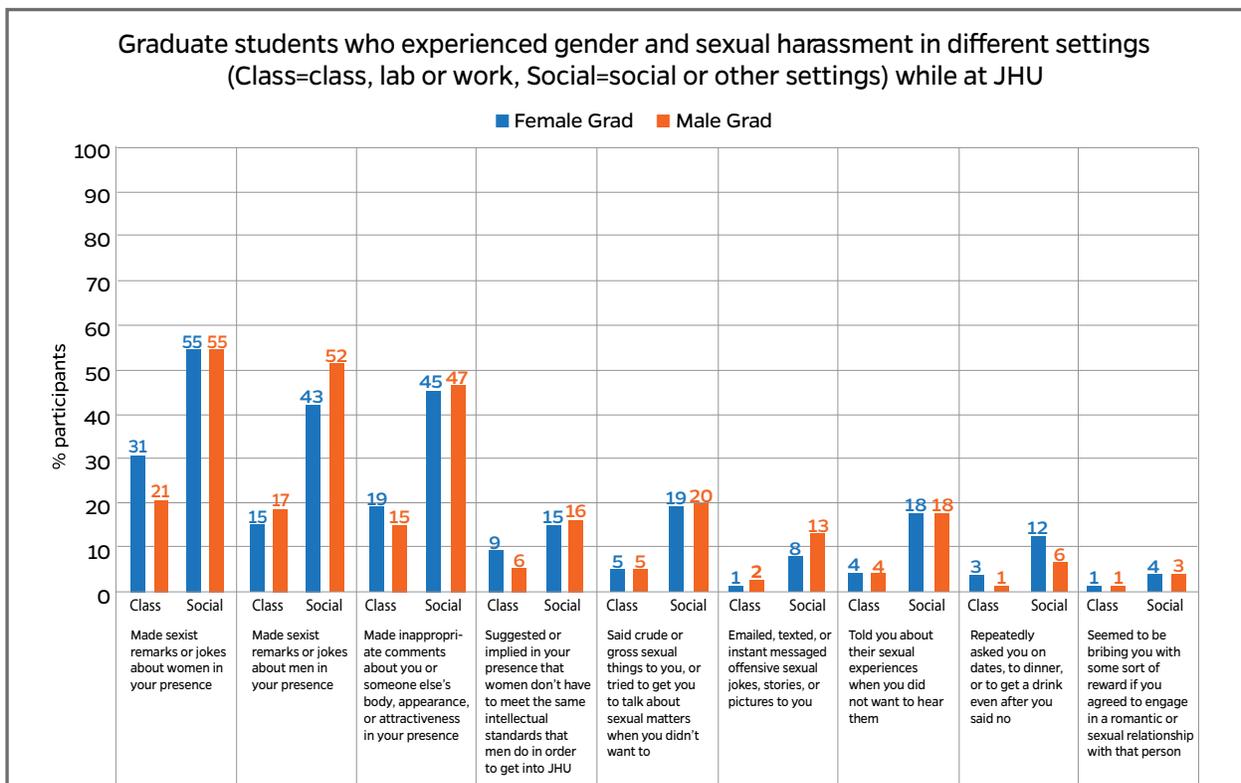
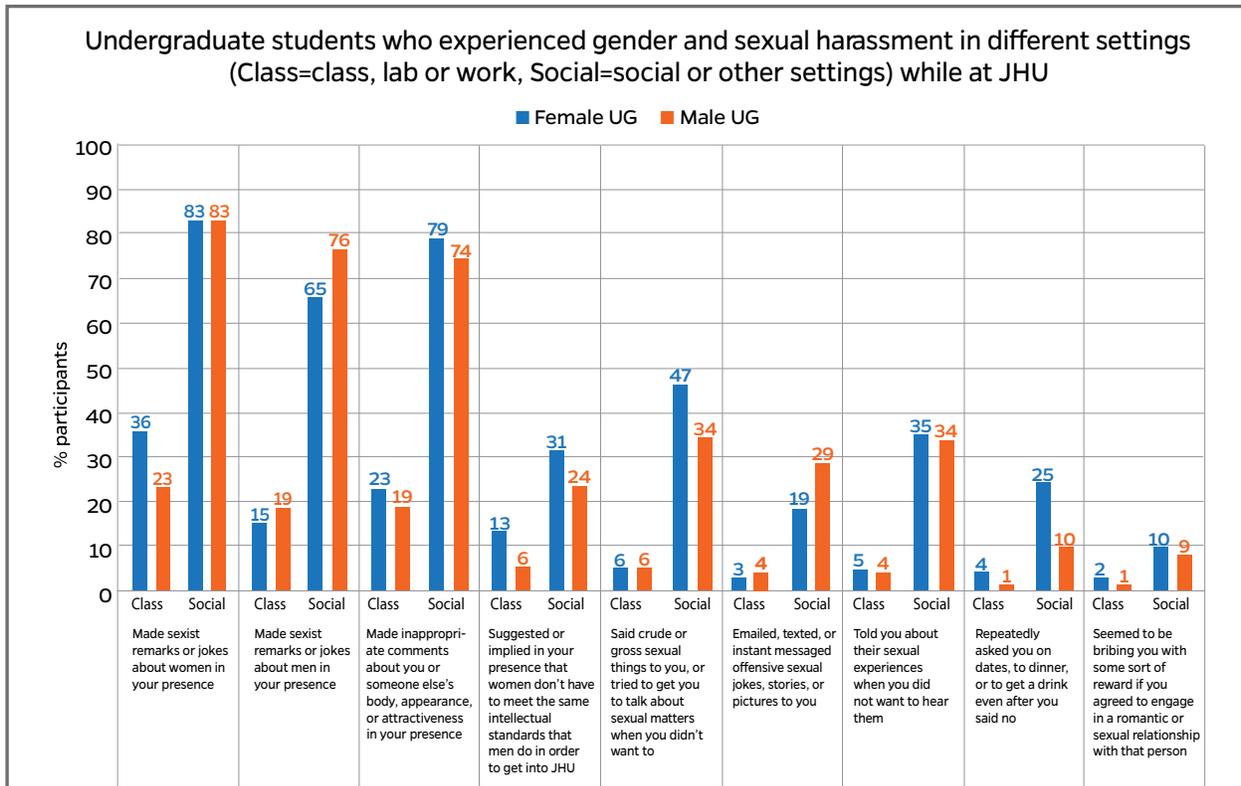
Percent of graduate respondents reporting different impacts due to experience of an unwanted sexual incident



Comparisons With Other Climate Surveys. The MIT survey reported data on similar questions; generally, JHU students reported lower prevalence of adverse impact than MIT students. As noted in their report, the most common impacts reported by MIT students who said they had an unwanted sexual experience were being unable to work or complete assignments (35%), being unable to eat (30%), loss of interest in intimacy or sex (36%), and grades dropping (29%).

Sexual and Gender Harassment

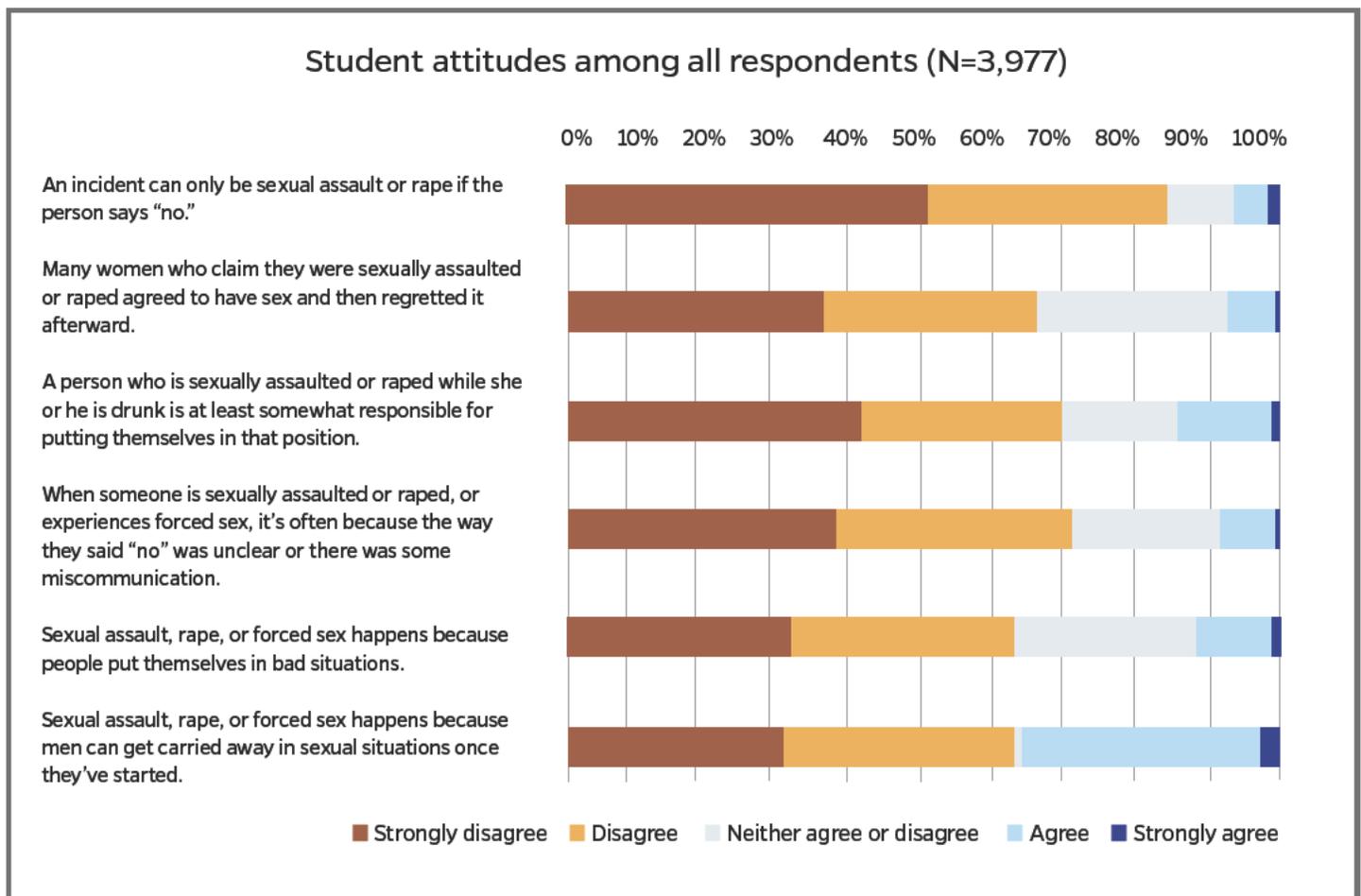
The following two figures show the percentage of undergraduate and graduate students reporting specific sexual or gender harassment while at JHU. Respondents were asked whether these experiences occurred in class/lab/work setting or in a social setting.



Comparisons With Other Climate Surveys. These questions were also asked in the MIT survey; the results were highly concordant between JHU and MIT. For example, the percentage of undergraduate women and men reporting that someone had made sexist remarks or jokes about women in their presence in class was 31% and 23%, respectively, similar to the 36% and 23% in the JHU survey.

Student Attitudes

Nearly all students in the survey (>95%) agreed or strongly agreed that *it is important to get consent before sexual activity*. The following figure shows results for specific questions regarding attitudes about rape and sexual assault, with results similar to those of the MIT survey.



The degree to which students undertook bystander actions depended on their association with the people involved. 61% of the undergraduate students and 49% of the graduate students would *walk a friend who has had too much to drink home from a party, bar, or other social event*. Further, 49% of the undergraduate students and 41% of the graduate students would *talk to the friends of a drunk person to make sure they don't leave him/her behind at a party, bar, or other social event*. However, only 32% of the undergraduate students and 25% of the graduate students would always or usually ask someone they didn't know who had had too much to drink/was out of it if they needed to be walked home. In contrast, over 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would respect someone who did something to prevent a sexual assault.

Campus Resource Utilization

Only 20% of students were somewhat or very familiar with the JHU Office of Institutional Equity (OIE). Nearly 79% of the students said that they were not at all familiar. Less than 1% (n=37) had participated in an OIE hearing.

Students were asked if they would use any of the following resources if they experienced any unwanted sexual behavior in the future; affirmative responses for each resource in rank order are:

- Sexual assault exam at the hospital (undergraduates: 63%, graduates: 66%)
- Forensic/DNA collected from the assault (undergraduates: 60%, graduates: 61%)
- On-campus health care professional (undergraduates: 58%, graduates: 61%)
- Off-campus health care professional (undergraduates: 57%, graduates: 57%)
- Local police (undergraduates: 54%, graduates: 65%)
- Mental health professional (undergraduates: 54%, graduates: 60%)
- JHU sexual assault helpline (undergraduates: 51%, graduates: 41%)
- General Counseling Center for JHU students (undergraduates: 49%, graduates: 40%)
- JHU campus security officers (undergraduates: 47%, graduates: 51%)
- JHU counselor/sexual assault prevention, education, and response coordinator (undergraduates: 46%, graduates: 35%)
- Student Affairs/dean of students (undergraduates: 45%, graduates: 48%)
- Residential Life staff (undergraduates: 42%, graduates: 12%)
- Local rape crisis center (undergraduates: 35%, graduates: 37%)
- Title IX coordinator (undergraduates: 24%, graduates: 15%)
- JHU Office of Institutional Equity (undergraduates: 16%, graduates: 21%)

Moving Forward

In August 2014, President Daniels sent a message to students, faculty, and staff expressing his commitment to strengthening the university's policies, programs, and training related to sexual misconduct. He wrote at that time that "sexual violence on our campuses, or anywhere, is unacceptable. It tears at the fabric of our university community; threatens the ability of our students, faculty, and staff to pursue scholarship and discovery; and diminishes our capacity to realize our fullest individual and collective potential. The safety and well-being of all members of the Johns Hopkins community are among our most fundamental responsibilities and will always be our shared priority."

In the year since that message, we as a university community have worked to shape a broad new set of policies and programs designed to address issues of sexual misconduct and to create a healthier and safer campus environment. The "It's On Us Hopkins" survey is thus but one component of our efforts, as detailed in the Fall 2015 *Standing Together* report.

What should we learn from the survey? First and foremost, the incidence of unwanted sexual behaviors, while comparable to our peers, is utterly unacceptable. Second, among all students who reported sexual violence, the majority were victimized by an acquaintance, peer or colleague, or friend. We also learned important facts about patterns. While the most common pattern was male perpetrators and female victims, there were significant male-on-male unwanted sexual behaviors, especially among graduate students. And, as we know, unwanted sexual experiences, including rape, are possible and have happened in ongoing relationships.

We found that victims do not always recognize themselves as victims; this is reflected in the differences in reported rates for labeled experiences vs. described behaviors. We found some of the reasons for not reporting an unwanted sexual experience particularly troubling, including fear of being blamed or not believed, fear of retaliation, or a belief that university administration wouldn't do anything. Students' intention to utilize JHU services was low, which could reflect a lack of awareness, confidence, or both. We also found a striking lack of awareness of the Office of Institutional Equity and other important sources of support. We will work to improve awareness of, confidence in, and efficiency of our policies and resources.

All of these findings point the way to additional actions we can and must take to prevent such experiences at Hopkins. In this regard, we view the overall problem as part of a complex system, and recognize the need for a suite of various preventive approaches. Perhaps most importantly, we want to say to our students who have experienced unwanted sexual behaviors: We are here to support you. You should feel no shame, no fear, and no blame.

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